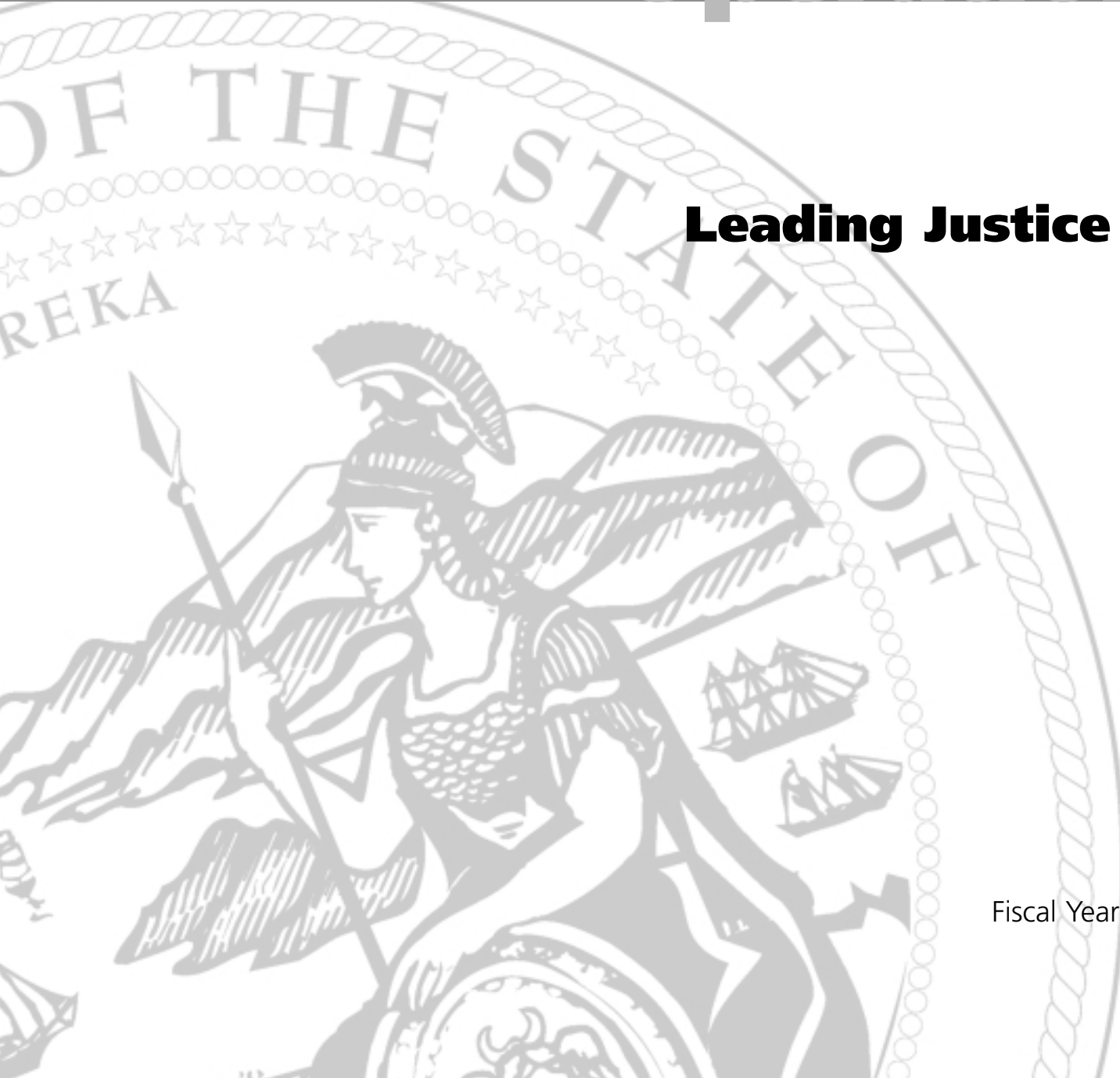


# Operational Plan

## **Leading Justice Into the Future**



Judicial Council of California  
Operational Plan  
Fiscal Years 2000–2001 Through 2002–2003

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## JUDICIAL COUNCIL OPERATIONAL PLAN FISCAL YEARS 2000–2001 THROUGH 2002–2003

The Judicial Council Operational Plan is a three-year plan linked to the six goals identified in the Strategic Plan, *Leading Justice Into the Future*. The Operational Plan articulates high-priority, state-level operational objectives, or ends (rather than activities, or means), and the desired outcomes of each. Desired outcomes are expressed in measurable terms to provide a more concrete understanding of the objectives.

The Operational Plan is not an exhaustive inventory of activities to be performed at the state level but rather a short-term “agenda” of results the council wishes to achieve through its own efforts and those of its advisory committees and the Administrative Office of the Courts. The 29 objectives outlined in the plan include new as well as traditional, ongoing priorities.

The Judicial Council adopted this inaugural Operational Plan on August 24, 2000, and will develop a new plan in 2003, as required by the recently approved judicial branch strategic planning guidelines. In the intervening years, the council will periodically hold progress reviews at its annual planning workshop and at other appropriate times.

The council’s Strategic Plan, *Leading Justice Into the Future*, and the Operational Plan are posted on the California Courts Web site at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov).

## ABOUT THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

The 27-member Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice, it is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts serves as the staff agency to the council. As the head of the third branch of government, the Judicial Council pursues a variety of other duties and responsibilities, defined by the state Constitution as well as by numerous statutes and legislation to improve the administration of justice. The council’s Strategic Plan outlines a broad vision for the future of the state’s judicial system and is part of the council’s continuing effort to address the complex issues facing the California courts.



Photo: Shelley Eades



## GOAL I

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### **ACCESS, FAIRNESS, AND DIVERSITY**

All Californians will have equal access to the courts and equal ability to participate in court proceedings, and will be treated in a fair and just manner. Members of the judicial branch community will reflect the rich diversity of the state's residents.

#### **Issue Description**

California's courts are challenged with serving a growing population that is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse in the nation. Individuals of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds will soon compose the majority of the state's population. California residents speak 224 different languages and innumerable dialects. Literacy levels of both English-speaking and limited- or non-English-speaking residents also vary. In addition to the access issues created by the state's diversity, past and present societal biases against characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, and physical disability also create barriers that make it more difficult for some individuals to fully access court services or fully participate in court business. Factors such as geography, socioeconomic status, and procedural practices may also create barriers to court services for some segments of the state's population.



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## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

### a. Unrepresented Litigants

Improve the ability of trial courts to increase access and fairness for unrepresented litigants.

### b. Diverse Court Workforce

Develop a comprehensive policy and strategies to assist courts in attracting and retaining a diverse workforce.

### c. Interpreters

Increase the availability and number of certified and registered interpreters.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

- ☐ Statewide action plan for serving unrepresented persons is developed.
- ☐ Trial courts have a strategic plan for serving unrepresented persons.
- ☐ Number of self-help centers in the courts is increased.
- ☐ Web site for self-represented litigants is implemented.
  
- ☐ Workforce diversity (e.g., culture, ethnicity, race) is increased.
- ☐ Diverse workforce is retained.
  
- ☐ Full-day usage of noncertified/nonregistered interpreters is reduced statewide.
- ☐ Certified interpreter pool is increased.
- ☐ Registered interpreter pool is increased.
- ☐ Certified American Sign Language interpreters are available as needed.
- ☐ Interpreter services are available in remote locations.



## GOAL II

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### INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The judiciary will be an institutionally independent, separate branch of government that responsibly seeks, uses, and accounts for public resources necessary for its support. The independence of judicial decision making will be protected.

#### Issue Description

The judiciary is one of the three distinct and separate branches of state government. As such, the judiciary must exercise its inherent and statutory authority and responsibility to plan for, direct, monitor, and control the business of the judicial branch and must account to the public for the branch's performance. The judicial branch is responsible for managing its affairs, which includes securing, allocating, and accounting for public resources. In exercising these responsibilities, the judicial branch needs to work cooperatively with the state's executive and legislative branches. The judiciary also must maintain the ability to make case-related decisions free from external pressures of a personal, economic, or political nature, including any fear of reprisal, to retain the trust and confidence of the public as an independent, fair, and impartial arbiter of disputes.

## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

### a. Branch Resources

Ensure the appropriate level of resources for the judicial branch.

### b. Branch Fiduciary Responsibilities

Ensure that judicial branch fiduciary responsibilities are being met.

### c. Transition to Statewide Funding

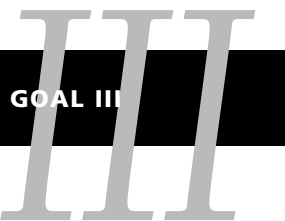
Facilitate the resolution of outstanding and transitional statutory issues related to the Trial Court Funding Act and to state and county responsibilities.

### d. Implementation of Laws and Rules

Develop a program to ensure timely, effective statewide implementation of laws and rules.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

- ☐ Branch budget is consistent with identified needs.
- ☐ Budget process is standardized and consistent with state practices.
- ☐ Recognition of branch needs by Department of Finance, Governor, and Legislature is enhanced.
- ☐ Public funds are managed prudently and used efficiently.
- ☐ Internal controls are strengthened.
- ☐ Statewide financial and fiscal management technology tools are provided to courts.
- ☐ Ongoing training and educational forums are provided for court fiscal staff.
- ☐ Contracting and procurement procedures are established and implemented.
- ☐ Comprehensive risk management program is established and implemented.
- ☐ Court operations are defined.
- ☐ Consistent, stable statewide practices are established.
- ☐ Courts' planning capabilities are enhanced.
- ☐ Courts have policies and procedures that adequately address human resources; contracting and procurement; facilities; fiscal needs; information technology systems; legal needs; and judicial, executive, and staff education needs.
- ☐ Credibility with other branches of government is improved.
- ☐ Public trust and confidence in the courts are increased.
- ☐ Presiding judges have increased responsibility and authority to ensure compliance with laws and rules.



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### **MODERNIZATION OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

Justice will be administered in a timely, efficient, and effective manner that utilizes contemporary management practices; innovative ideas; highly competent judges, other judicial officers, and staff; and adequate facilities.

#### **Issue Description**

Expanding workloads resulting from greater numbers of cases, increased case complexity, and the courts' need to respond to the information requirements of many entities are putting pressure on the California court system's ability to fulfill its responsibilities. Workload increases and backlogs have been experienced in recent years at all levels of the state court system. Due to the courts' historical bifurcated funding structure, planning and implementation of judicial administration policies, practices, and systems have been fragmented. As a result, administrative practices and systems used by the courts are dated and vary across the state. Yet the public is entitled to the efficient and convenient delivery of court services and to the resolution of disputes in a just and timely manner. The effective administration of justice requires deliberate attention to ensuring that the core processes and essential activities of the judicial branch are contemporary and to promoting excellence and continuous improvement in these areas.



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## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

### a. Statewide Facilities Plan

Develop and implement short-term and long-term statewide plans to provide suitable court facilities that satisfy current and future needs.

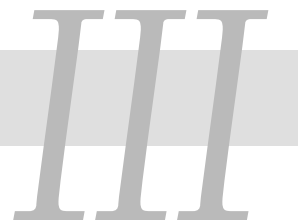
## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

- ☐ A court facility planning and construction program is implemented.
- ☐ Modern, functional courthouses, provided through facility renovation, construction, or leasing, are planned.
- ☐ Court facilities are well maintained, efficient, and comfortable for court users and personnel.
- ☐ Adequate funds to address court facility needs are acquired and expended by the state and counties.
- ☐ Unique access and safety needs of all court users, including children, families, and people with disabilities, are identified and addressed.
- ☐ Short-term technology infrastructure needs are addressed.

### b. Transition From County Administration

Support the trial courts' transition from county administration to local management.

- ☐ Courts administer service provider agreements that meet local needs and statewide policy and legal requirements.
- ☐ Courts administer labor agreements and personnel policies and procedures efficiently and effectively.
- ☐ Courts have appropriate management information systems and supporting infrastructure to effectively manage court administrative operations.



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## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

### c. Small Court Administration

Provide technical assistance and education programs to help smaller trial courts administer court operations independently.

### d. Human Resources

Provide human resource services to trial courts.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

- ☐ Courts have access to an information clearinghouse and a menu of technical assistance options from the AOC.
- ☐ Collaborative relationships are established between smaller courts, AOC, and council.
- ☐ Collaborative relationships are established among smaller courts.
- ☐ Court personnel receive more training on a broad range of administrative tasks.
- ☐ A state-sponsored service bureau provides for the technology needs of small courts.
  
- ☐ Types of human resources services and target populations are identified.
- ☐ Service delivery alternatives and resource requirements are identified.
- ☐ Human resources services to trial courts are implemented (e.g., pilot programs, phased implementation).
- ☐ Courts are aware of services and have access to resources to handle human resources matters.
- ☐ Statewide standards for human resources management information systems are developed and implemented in courts.

## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

### e. Civil Procedure

Develop comprehensive recommendations for changing civil procedure to take advantage of unification, improve efficiency, and increase access.

- ☐ Obsolete civil procedures are identified and eliminated.
- ☐ Access to civil courts to resolve disputes involving small amounts of money is protected.
- ☐ Simplified forms and procedures and greater access through electronic means are made available to attorneys and litigants.

### f. Civil Case Management

Revise civil case management rules and standards, propose legislation, and provide judges and court staff with appropriate training and resources.

- ☐ Civil case management is simplified and improved.
- ☐ Best practices are adopted statewide.
- ☐ Civil case disposition time continues to improve.
- ☐ Courts' expertise and technical ability to manage civil cases are improved.

### g. Uniform Statewide Rules

Complete the transition to uniform statewide rules.

- ☐ Statewide rules in probate and civil pretrial areas are completed.
- ☐ Statewide rules for electronic filing and service are adopted.
- ☐ Areas where statewide rules are needed and/or desirable are identified.
- ☐ Clerks are trained in the effects of statewide rules and forms on local practices.
- ☐ Compliance with statewide rules is improved.



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## QUALITY OF JUSTICE AND SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

Judicial branch services will be responsive to the needs of the public and will enhance the public's understanding and use of and its confidence in the judiciary.

### Issue Description

The judicial branch serves an ever-changing society. Social and legal trends such as changing family structure, increasing awareness of domestic violence, and developing changes in dispute resolution practices are a few examples of the dynamic nature of society. The judicial branch serves multiple constituencies that have differing levels of knowledge about and contact with the judiciary. The quality and timeliness of dispute resolution affect both the quality of life for residents and the quality of the state's business environment. To be a relevant, stabilizing force in society, the judicial branch must be responsive to emerging issues and changes and must foster and retain the respect, trust, and confidence of its diverse constituencies. Community outreach and education are essential to these efforts.

## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

### a. Children

Expand access and fairness for children who are before the court or affected by trial court proceedings.

- ☐ Adequate data describing the characteristics and numbers of children before the courts are available.
- ☐ Expenditures for court-appointed attorneys for children and parents are determined.
- ☐ Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs are available to all 58 counties.
- ☐ CASA programs have volunteers assisting children in areas of law in addition to juvenile dependency, such as juvenile delinquency, family, probate, and domestic violence.

### b. Standard Court Services

Develop a statewide strategy to reduce differences among courts in the quality and availability of trial court services provided to children, youth, families, and adults requiring court intervention.

- ☐ "Essential service standards" are drafted.
- ☐ Promising practices are collected and tested.
- ☐ At least one mentor court is established, using essential standards and promising practices.

### c. Unified Family Courts

Implement a statewide strategy for establishing unified or coordinated family court systems.

- ☐ A statewide database cataloging the types and range of services is available in each court.
- ☐ A statewide strategy and a multiyear plan are established to improve the coordination of proceedings involving children and families.
- ☐ Six mentor courts are established.

### d. Jury Service

Improve jury service.

- ☐ Juror per diem fee is increased to at least \$40.
- ☐ One-day/one-trial program is fully implemented.
- ☐ Policy issues regarding jury size and the number of peremptory challenges allowed in civil and criminal cases are resolved.



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## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

### e. Collaborative Courts

Investigate and assess the ability of trial courts to develop and maintain partnerships with other agencies to serve parties in specified cases involving drugs, domestic violence, youth, or other issues.

### f. Public Outreach

Use effective statewide education and outreach to improve public trust and confidence.

### g. Rule-Making Reform

Develop and implement a strategy to enhance the Judicial Council's rule-making responsibility in areas of pleading, practice, procedure, and administration.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

- ☐ Types of collaborative/specialty courts are identified and inventoried.
- ☐ Criteria for collaborative justice are established.
- ☐ Information is available on "promising practices" for establishing specialty courts.
- ☐ Criteria are established for cost-benefit analysis/evaluation of drug courts.
  
- ☐ The public's understanding of the courts' role and operations and its trust in the justice system are improved.
- ☐ Each trial and appellate court has comprehensive community outreach and education programs.
- ☐ A variety of formats for public outreach exists, including video, Web, and CD-ROM.
- ☐ A proactive statewide media relations and public education plan is implemented.
- ☐ Courts receive wider and more positive media coverage.
  
- ☐ The council collaborates with the Legislature to reform rule-making process in specified subject matter areas.
- ☐ Rules of pleading, practice, procedure, and administration in specified subject matter areas are revised, simplified, and written in plain English.
- ☐ Specified subject matter areas are governed solely by statewide rules.



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## EDUCATION

The effectiveness of judges, court personnel, and other judicial branch staff will be enhanced through high-quality continuing education and professional development.

### **Issue Description**

The quality of justice administered by the state's courts is directly related to the quality and competence of the people who work in the judicial branch. California's judicial system employs thousands of individuals, including judges, other judicial officers, court support staff, court managers, and various administrative personnel. With the increasing complexity of the law and court procedures, delivery of justice to the people of California requires judges and court personnel to be equipped with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to administer the justice system in a fair, effective manner that fosters public confidence.



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## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

### a. Electronic Education

Provide new electronic means of connectivity among judicial officers, court executives, and court staff for planning and delivery of education (e.g., Web and video conferences, Web forums, online tutorials).

### b. Education Liaison

Create a local court liaison network to promote education programs.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

- ☐ Physical infrastructure, education models, and organizational processes for their use are established to support local and statewide connectivity.
- ☐ Education discussion groups are conducted electronically.
- ☐ All education committees create electronic courses as part of their charge.
- ☐ Courses are linked to curriculum and mandated education requirements.
- ☐ Statewide training programs are delivered efficiently and cost-effectively using state-of-the-art technology.
- ☐ Education programs, publications, and audio-visual and print program materials are delivered locally or regionally.
  
- ☐ An education liaison and local trainer is identified in every court.
- ☐ A training program is established for liaisons.
- ☐ An electronic forum/Web site facilitates communication among liaisons and the AOC.



## **TECHNOLOGY**

Technology will enhance the quality of justice by improving the ability of the judicial branch to collect, process, analyze, and share information and by increasing the public's access to information about the judicial branch.

### **Issue Description**

Technology can facilitate the timely flow of information within the judicial branch and to other public agencies that are partners in the justice system. However, due to the historically bifurcated funding of the state's courts, technology planning has been fragmented and resource levels have varied among the courts. As a result, technological resources used by courts are often incompatible and vary dramatically across jurisdictions. Rapidly evolving technological advances offer the judicial branch tremendous opportunities to develop coordinated solutions to statewide problems of data integrity, information distribution, and service delivery and to thereby eliminate redundant expenditures.

# VI

## PROPOSED OBJECTIVE

### a. Information Management

Improve the ability of the judicial branch to identify, collect, manage, and use information.

### b. Court Management Systems

Ensure that courts have effective court management systems.

### c. Technology Plans

Establish and support trial court technology group plans.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003

- ☐ AOC serves as a statewide information clearinghouse for court system information and best practices.
- ☐ Statewide data standards are implemented in courts.
- ☐ Effective methods for data collection and analysis are implemented by the council/AOC and the courts.
- ☐ Information is effectively and efficiently exchanged among courts and between courts and the council.
- ☐ AOC has a comprehensive, independent, and responsive research agenda to inform both council policymaking and court decision making.
- ☐ Courts are more aware of and provide more input to council policies, actions, and priorities.
- ☐ Each court has an effective court management system that meets statewide standards and local needs.
- ☐ The California Model Case Management System is installed in 15 to 20 courts.
- ☐ Each court has an appropriate technology infrastructure to support its court and administrative management information systems (e.g., fiscal systems, human resource systems, jury systems).
- ☐ Commercially provided case management systems are measured periodically against published standards required of California-specific systems.
- ☐ Each Trial Court Technology Group (TCTG) has developed and annually updates its strategic technology plan.
- ☐ Web-based planning tools are developed and implemented.
- ☐ Each TCTG plan meets members' needs and includes a multiyear funding plan.

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**PROPOSED OBJECTIVE****d. Technology Infrastructure**

Design and install the technology infrastructure that is necessary to support the trial and appellate courts' computing environment.

**e. Telecommunications**

Develop a telecommunications architecture and strategy for the trial courts.

**f. E-Government**

Expand the ability of the California Courts, Serranus, and local trial court Web sites to provide information and services.

**DESIRED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY JUNE 2003**

- ☐ Each court has a modern and effective technology infrastructure to support the court's technology systems and management information systems.
- ☐ Each court has adequate support for technology systems.
- ☐ Technology training is regularly provided to court staff.
- ☐ Each court maintains an equipment replacement cycle that optimally replaces one-third of a court's equipment annually and regularly updates and upgrades software and hardware used by the court.
- ☐ Each court has, minimally, a local area network in each court facility.
- ☐ Each court has access to a wide area network that links all court facilities within a county or all courts in a geographic region.
- ☐ Each court has access to e-mail systems and the Internet via browsers.
- ☐ Each court has appropriate telecommunications links with other courts in its region and with county and state justice community partners.
- ☐ The public can obtain forms and rules and can complete selected court transactions, such as e-filing, electronically.
- ☐ Serranus users can obtain educational and administrative information electronically and can make customized queries of AOC databases.
- ☐ Judicial Branch Statistical Information System (JBSIS) data warehouse is accessible via the Web.
- ☐ Judges, court staff, and AOC staff can complete routine administrative tasks electronically.

**1999–2000  
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